

My Eighth District, like others, counts on these family businesses and their teams working hard to support their families and aid their communities. As retailers, these teams often bring different or unique products to the marketplace. In manufacturing, they create innovative concepts and ideas. They manage to do all of this while at the same time providing stellar and personal customer service.

As a member of the House Committee on Small Business and because of my own experience as a small business owner, I am appreciative of the impact these small businesses have on our local economies. In fact, 80 percent of our domestic job growth comes from the small- and medium-sized business community.

I am proud of the contributions of these mom and pop business owners across America and hope that my colleagues will join with me in celebrating this important day.

□ 1030

CLOSE THE LOOPHOLE ON 527 GROUPS

(Mr. McHENRY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. McHENRY. Mr. Speaker, what we have today is more liberal lunacy. Billionaires like the Daddy Warbucks of the Democratic Party, George Soros, are pushing their left-wing agenda by funneling hundreds of millions of dollars through shady organizations called 527 groups.

Section 527 groups operate outside of campaign finance laws by spending hundreds of millions of dollars on ads and partisan voter recruitment efforts with no oversight and no accountability.

Mr. Speaker, \$370 million flowed through 527 groups in the last campaign election cycle, and this is outside of campaign disclosure. So much for taking big money out of politics.

Over one-fifth of the \$370 million channeled through 527s came from four individuals. This is money laundering on a scale that would make even Tony Soprano blush.

Mr. Speaker, it is time that we close this loophole on 527s and open transparent and accountable campaigns to the American people.

REPUBLICAN REFUSAL TO EXTEND PRESCRIPTION DRUG SIGN-UP PERIOD

(Mrs. JONES of Ohio asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, it is time the House Republicans stand up to the Bush White House and say they are not going to allow America's seniors to be penalized for a complicated and confusing drug proposal they helped create.

It was bad enough that the Republicans allowed the big drug companies to write their own prescription drug plan for them, but now that a deadline looms 47 days away that would inflict a tax on seniors who have not yet chosen a plan, Republicans seem willing to, once again, blindly follow the President.

Earlier someone made the comment that Democrats are not doing enough to have seniors sign up for the plan. I beg to differ. I work very hard to have my seniors sign up and save money, but they will never save as much, the billions of dollars that went to the drug companies, as the drug companies will receive in that process.

House Republicans seem willing to once again rubber-stamp a plan that would inflict a Bush prescription drug tax on seniors for the rest of their lives. They have yet to show any support for Democratic efforts to extend the sign-up deadline to the end of the year.

While America's seniors continue to pay outrageously high prices for their prescription drugs, House Republicans can no longer just rubber-stamp.

IMMIGRATION REFORM

(Mr. GINGREY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GINGREY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of securing our borders and getting legislation to the President's desk that will stop the flow of illegal immigrants into our country.

This week, the Senate is debating immigration reform, and it is crucial that they pass legislation that puts enforcement first and says "no" to blanket amnesty.

As a physician, I know you have to stop a patient's bleeding before you can heal the wound. Likewise, we must stop the bleeding of our borders before we can address other areas of reform.

Our southern border is not just bleeding; it is hemorrhaging. Thousands of illegal immigrants cross it each month, and our incomplete border fence does little to tame the flow. Our border enforcement is woefully understaffed, and local law enforcement officials lack the jurisdiction to apprehend illegal immigrants within their own communities.

Mr. Speaker, the House passed legislation in December to address each of these concerns. Reforming our immigration system requires a commitment to security and lawfulness, and our Senate colleagues must pledge their resolve to these core principles as they move forward in this debate.

REPUBLICANS REFUSE TO TAKE 9/11 COMMISSION SERIOUSLY

(Mr. PALLONE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, more than 4 years have passed since 9/11, and

Washington Republicans have failed to make the American people as safe as they should be.

House Republicans continue to ignore the real security risks that we face. They allow President Bush to disregard the recommendations from the independent 9/11 Commission. After all, House Republicans stood by the Bush administration in its attempts to keep the 9/11 Commission from ever being created.

A report from the commission in December gave the Bush administration failing grades in securing our Nation. From chemical plants to subways, ports and the border, the commission report showed how Washington has failed to take the proper steps needed to close security gaps.

House Republicans could make homeland security a priority if they joined us this month in rejecting President Bush's 2007 budget that dramatically underfunds key homeland security programs. Unfortunately, I am concerned Republicans will once again pay lip service to these critical security needs and will, instead, once again, rubber-stamp a Bush budget that leaves us vulnerable to those who wish us harm.

HONORING FIRST SERGEANT MICHAEL MATTHEWS

(Mr. PRICE of Georgia asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, today, I recognize an American who has given so much to our community and our country.

In January of this year, Michael Matthews of the Roswell, Georgia, Police Department was named the 2005 Officer of the Year for his work as a patrol officer and SWAT team member. When Officer Matthews is not serving the Roswell Police Department, he dedicates his time to protect America as a member of the Army National Guard.

On August 30 of last year, First Sergeant Matthews was on patrol in Iraq when his convoy was struck by an IED. Suffering injuries requiring surgery, First Sergeant Matthews received the Purple Heart for being wounded in combat. The deepest gratitude of the American people go to First Sergeant Matthews and his fellow soldiers.

True patriots are protecting and serving their local communities, as well as our country at large. As these brave men and women stand on the front lines of the war on terrorism, there should be no limit to the time and opportunities we take here at home to remind the American people of their courageous and selfless acts.

REAUTHORIZATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION ACT

(Mr. KELLER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. KELLER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the Higher Education Act, which will be reauthorized